

CONCEPTS OF NIDRA IN AYURVEDA AS A NATURE'S HEALER**Shalini Bainjwan*¹, Chandra Mohan Yadav²**

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ABSTRACT

"Nidra" refers to the concept of sleep and rest, which is considered essential for overall health and well-being. Proper sleep is viewed as crucial for maintaining the balance of the three doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) and for supporting physical, mental, and emotional health. Here are some key aspects of Nidra in Ayurveda. Nidra is a fundamental biological process essential for physical health, cognitive function, and emotional well-being. Characterized by alternating cycles of REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM sleep, sleep serves critical roles in restorative functions such as memory consolidation, metabolic regulation, and immune system support. Epidemiological studies indicate that insufficient or disrupted sleep contributes to numerous health issues, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health disorders. The mechanisms underlying sleep regulation involve a complex interplay of neurobiological pathways, circadian

rhythms, and environmental factors. Advances in sleep research have led to the development of various assessment tools, such as polysomnography and actigraphy, facilitating the diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders. Furthermore, the growing recognition of the impact of sleep on overall health has prompted public health initiatives aimed at promoting healthy sleep practices. This abstract underscore the importance of sleep as a crucial determinant of well-being and emphasizes the need for continued research to address the challenges posed by sleep deprivation in modern society.

KEYWORDS: *Nidra*, Sleep, *Adharaniya Vega*.

INTRODUCTION

The word Nidra derived from the prefix “Ni” is the Sanskrit root of our English word “Nether” or down as in “Nether world” (under world) While suffix “dra” may be cognate with the English “drowsy” to be half asleep, to be inactive or present an appearance of peaceful inactivity or isolation. According to Ayurveda, one should wake up at ‘Brahma muhurta’ sleep is an important phenomenon in our life as a part of normal physiology.

Recent studies highlight the significance of sleep cycles, particularly the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) and non-REM stages, in facilitating neural plasticity and learning. Disruptions in Nidra patterns have been linked to a myriad of health issues, including mental disorders, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic syndrome. Furthermore, the societal implications of sleep deprivation stress the need for public awareness and intervention strategies. Cultural interpretations and practices surrounding Nidra also vary widely, influencing attitudes towards sleep and its perceived importance. Indigenous and traditional societies often incorporate rituals associated with sleep, emphasizing its spiritual aspects, while contemporary lifestyles may prioritize productivity over rest, leading to chronic sleep deprivation. In conclusion, Nidra represents a multifaceted area of study that intersects with various disciplines, including neuroscience, psychology, and cultural studies. Further research is essential to unravel the intricacies of sleep and its implications on individual and societal health. Addressing sleep-related issues could foster significant advancements in public health, productivity, and overall quality of life.

WHY SLEEP IS SO IMPORTANT?

When the mind (as well as the soul) gets exhausted and the sensory and motor organs become inactive then the individual gets sleep. So when mind dissociates itself from some object, the person also dissociates from it. The sensory and motor organs are not active because of the inaction of individuals. Here, ‘Manas’ denotes ‘Internal senses’ (Antahkarana) or self-accompanied by manas. ‘Karmatmanah’ means senses or it may denote worldly souls. Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death – all these occur depending on the proper or improper sleep. Like the night of destructions, untimely and excessive sleep and prolonged vigil take away both happiness and longevity. Sleep, if properly enjoyed brings about happiness and longevity in human beings as the real knowledge brings about Siddhi (spiritual power) in a

yogi. Sleep at the night time makes the balance of the body constituents (Dhatusamya), alertness, good vision, good complexion and fired digestive power (Bhavamishra, 2009). Those who take proper sleep in proper time will not suffer from disease, the mind of them will be peaceful, they gain strength and good complexion, good virility. Bliss & gloom, nourishment & emaciation, power & weakness, virility & sterility, knowledge lack of knowledge, existence & bereavement all these occur depending on the proper or improper sleep. Excessive, improper and sleeplessness leads to misery and finally to death. Proper sleep will make for happiness and long life just as the mind of the sages became clear from the knowledge of the soul.

As per Acharya Charaka, Nidra is a condition in which mana including Indriyas dissociate themselves from their objects. According to Acharya Sushruta, Nidra is related to God Vishnu. Acharya Vagbhat has said that Nidra is produced from Tamas at the time of commencement of the creation. It is another form of Tamas itself and manifest when tama is predominant, generally at night. Nidra has been considered as brihana factors (nourishing factor) in routine life means it promotes health by nourishing dhatus & increasing kapha which is responsible for the strength and immunity of body as well as mind. One who gets sound sleep at night, can digest the food well, his kaya agni is enhanced & there is proper nourishment of body.

As per Morden points: Sleep is the natural periodic state of rest for mind and body with closed eyes characterized by partial or complete loss of consciousness. Human body has many rhythms that influence and regulate physiological functions, performance, moods, and behavioral responses. Sleep is regulated by the circadian rhythm. Any disruption of this rhythm can result in interrupted sleep and causes a myriad of problems, including fatigue, mental changes and physical changes.

CLASSIFICATION OF NIDRA ACCORDING TO ACHARYAS

S.NO.	<i>Charaka</i>	<i>Sushruta</i>	<i>Vagbhata</i>
1.	<i>Tamobhava</i>	<i>Swabhaviki</i>	<i>Tamobhava</i>
2.	<i>Sleshma samdbhava</i>	<i>Vaikariki</i>	<i>Aamayakledaprabhavaja</i>
3.	<i>Manasharira shrama</i>	<i>Tamsi</i>	<i>Chittdehaprabhavaja</i>
4.	<i>Agantuki</i>		<i>Agantuki</i>
5.	<i>Vyadhayanuvartini</i>		<i>Kaphaprabhavaja</i>
6.	<i>Ratriswabhavaprabhava</i>		<i>Dekledaprabhavaja</i>
7.			<i>Kalasvabhavaja</i>

According to Acharya Charaka

- 1 The sleep caused by increased Tamas is Tamobhava.
- 2 The sleep caused by augmented Kapha is Shleshmasamudbhava.
- 3 The sleep caused by exhaustion of body and mind is Manahshareer sambhava.
- 4 That produced during bad prognostic indication occurring before death is Agantuki.
That which occurs as a subsequent complication of disease is Vyadhyanuvaritini.
- 5 That which occurs during night is physiological and called Ratriswabhavprabhva.

According to Acharya Sushruta there are three types of Nidra:

- 1 Tamsik- Tamsik Nidra is created when sangyavaha shrotas are filled with shleshma that is ruled by tamoguna.
- 2 Swabhaviki- All living things normally experience this kind of Nidra on a daily basis.
- 3 Vaikariki- Nidra does not happen if the body and mana are disturbed. However, if Nidra does occur, it is Vaikariki Nidra.

According to Acharya Vagbhat there are seven types of nidra

- 1 Kalaswabhawaj- it is produced by nature of habituated time.
- 2 Amayaja- by the depression or fatigue due to diseases.
- 3 By fatigue of mana- mental agony.
- 4 By fatigue of shareer.
- 5 Shleshmaprabhavaj- This occurs because of an excess of kaph
- 6 Agantuka- This type of Nidra is caused by external factors, such as trauma and others
- 7 Tamobhava- It is caused by an excess of Tamoguna.

Understanding these categories highlights the complexity of sleep and its underlying influences. Sleep itself is a natural and vital urge that should never be ignored or suppressed, as doing so can lead to various physical and mental health issues including yawning, muscle pain, drowsiness, headaches, ENT disorders, and heaviness of the eyes. The importance of adequate sleep.

1. **Samyak Nidra**, cannot be overstated, as it maintains the balance of body tissues and Doshas, fostering overall physical and mental well-being. Charak emphasizes that both positive and negative aspects of health and life—such as happiness and sorrow, strength and weakness, or even life and death—are closely tied to the quality of sleep one attains.
2. **Atinidra**: Over sleep leads to obesity and diseases due to increased Kaphadosha such as

DM.

3. **Anidra:** Inadequate sleep leads to increase Vatadosha, wasting of tissue, emaciation and nervousness.

PHYSIOLOGY OF NIDRA

According to Acharya Charaka, When the mana gets exhausted or becomes inactive and the gyanendriyas and karmendriyas become inactive then the individual gets sleep. Acharya Charaka explained the physiology of sleep that when the shrotas of body is covered by kapha, then body is fatigued by exertion and sense organs stop functioning, nidra manifest in the body. Acharya Sushruta stated that, when the hridhyam (chetana sthana) invaded by tamoguna, person falls sleepy. Tamoguna is the cause of sleep.

According of Howell, sleep is due to cerebral ischemia. Cerebral cortex is the seat of higher mental function like pre and posts central gyres, association area etc; which have the correlation with mental activities. Sleep has an internal organization regulated by different areas of brain. This rhythm is regulated by two brain processes. The restorative process is a response to how long one stays awake. The second process controls timing of sleep and wakefulness during the day- night cycle. The timing of sleep is controlled by suprachiasmatic nucleus of hypothalamus, which responds to light and causes sleepiness at night when it is dark.

HORMONAL REGULATOR: Melatonin is important to regulate normal sleep cycles. Hormone is produced by pineal gland. Melatonin is produced during dark hours of sleep and is released in response to changes in light and inhibits neurotransmitters involved in arousal, such as Histamin, dopamine and serotonin.

PHENOMENON OF NIDRA ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT THEORIES

1. Theories of Upanishad
2. Theories of Yoga
3. Theories of Ayurveda
4. Tamoprabhava theory
5. Klama (Fatigue) theory
6. Swabhava nidra theory
7. Kapha dosha theory

AGE AND SLEEP NEEDED IN HOURS

Newborns (0-2 months) 12-18 hours

Infants (3-11 months) 14-15 hours

Toddlers (1-3 years) 12-14 hours

Preschoolers (3-5 years) 11-13 hours

School age children (5-10 years) 10-11 hours Teens (10-17 years) 8.5- 9.25 hours

Adults 7-9 hours

SLEEP ACCORDING TO EACH DOSHAS

Each individual is different and can experience similar yet non-identical type of sleep.

Vata prakriti: person will experience light, irregular and short duration of sleep. However Vata person would benefit with more rest. Symptoms of teeth grinding, sleep walking and sleep talking are common. Dreams tend to be airy in nature; he will see that he's flying in air etc. Since Vata types are light sleepers, they can easily wake during the night, without being able to fall back asleep. Dominant individuals often need 6-7 hrs of sleep.

Pitta prakriti: person will experience sound sleep but also light. Generally, the amount of sleep is moderate, but they often forego sleep when preoccupied. Dreams tend to be wild, fiery and vivid. Falling back asleep after waking at night is troublesome because mind is overactive. Difficult to fall back asleep. Pitta dominant individuals often need 7-8 hrs of sleep to feel refresh.

Kapha prakriti: person will experience deep and sound sleep, heavy, stubborn. Meaning they are not easily disturbed or woken. They have a tendency to oversleep even though they don't need to sleep for long periods. Kapha dominant individuals need 8-9 hrs of sleep.

Role of Nidra in disease manifestation

- Sleeping in daytime except in Greeshma ritu causes vitiation of Kapha and Pitta.
- It can cause Krimi, Prameha, Sthaulya, Visarpa, Medovaha Shrotodushti, Yonikanda, Asrigdara.
- Sleeping on Cot (Khatva) leads to Vata vitiation.
- Excess sleeping leads to Kapha prakopa.
- Sleeping on uncomfortable beds can lead to Vatavyadhi.
- Excess sleeping especially in day time can lead to Pratishyaya and Arsh.

- Sleeping with face down leads to Mukhroga.
- Sleeping in daytime by Rajaswala leads to birth of a child who is always sleepy.
- Prakriti- Vaata prakriti person sleeps less.

EFFECTS OF INSOMNIA ON BODY

- Body ache
- Indigestion
- Drowsiness
- Giddiness

Improper sleep causes mental as well as physical diseases like diabetes mellitus, hypertension, obesity, congenital heart diseases. Due to stressful lifestyle and improper sleep the risk of hypertension has increased.

PCOD: Impaired sleep pattern is also related to hormonal changes in body causing PCOD.

Obesity: Inadequate sleep impacts secretion of signal hormone ghrelin, which increases appetite and leptin causing obesity. Sleep deprivation causes impairment of the immune system plus metabolic changes favoring obesity.

Diabetes mellitus: Improper sleep causes Diabetes mellitus.

CHD: Stressful lifestyle causes coronary heart diseases.

Chronic headache: Improper sleep causes repeated chronic headache.

Impaired memory: Improper sleep also affects memory functions of the body.

SOME OF COMMON DISORDERS DUE TO DISTURBED SLEEP

Bruxism biting of teeth, Hypopnea syndrome, Insomnia, Restless legs syndrome (RLS), an irresistible urge to move legs, Shift work sleep disorder (SWSD), a situational circadian rhythm sleep disorder, Sleep apnea.

Addiction: Due to smoking, alcoholism, psychological disturbances more people get addicted and various causes of death due to cancer etc. Today addiction is also major problem in India.

MODERN CONCEPT: By the change of the time and the evolution of humanity, human lifestyle has changed. In ancient time, people were less occupied in their work and the stress was also very less. People had time to spend with their family and friends. But the scenario has changed in today's world. Now everyone is busy in their lives and social media is taking place of actual relations. This is creating more stress in people. People rarely get time to think about their health. People consider difficult to follow Dincharya explained in Ayurveda. Lifestyle of Indian.

Villagers is more natural than people living in urban area. Village people work hard in farms, sleeps early at night, wake up early morning and eat natural food. Junk food is not a part of their diet. On the contrary, People residing in metro cities, don't have much physical work to do and junk food is an essential part of their diet. They perform night duties and wake up late mornings. This causes great disturbances in the biological clock of their body landing up in many health hazards like constipation, fatty liver changes, indigestion, depression, anxiety, hypertension, diabetes, chronic headaches, insomnia, lack of concentration, mood swings etc.

IMPORTANCE

Happiness, misery, nourishment, emaciation, strength, weakness, virility, sterility, knowledge, ignorance, life and death – all these occur depending on the proper or improper sleep. Like the night of destructions, untimely and excessive sleep and prolonged vigil take away both happiness and longevity. Sleep, if properly enjoyed brings about happiness and longevity in human beings as the real knowledge brings about Siddhi (spiritual power) in a yogi. During the summer in the day time one should sleep in an air cooled apartment. In the night, after having besmeared the body with sandal paste, one should sleep on the open airy roof of the house which is cooled by the rays of the moon. Sleep used in the management of emaciation.

Restorative Function

Sleep allows the body and brain to recover, repair tissues, and regulate hormone levels.

Mental Health

Adequate sleep supports emotional stability, cognitive function, learning, and memory formation.

Immune and Metabolic Health

Quality sleep strengthens the immune system and helps regulate appetite, metabolism, and blood sugar levels.

Lack of Sleep Consequences

Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to serious issues such as heart disease, diabetes, depression, and impaired judgment.

Sleep Hygiene Importance

Healthy habits like consistent sleep schedules, reduced screen time before bed, and a calming sleep environment are essential for better sleep quality.

INDICATIONS OF DAY SLEEP

Sleeping during the day time in all seasons is prescribed for those who are exhausted by singing, study, alcoholic drinks, sexual acts, elimination therapy, carrying heavy weight, walking long distance; those suffering from phthisis, wasting, thirst, diarrhoea, colic pain, dyspnoea, hiccup, insanity, those who are too old, too young, weak and emaciated; those injured by fall and assault, those exhausted by journey by a vehicle, vigil, anger, grief and fear and those who are accustomed to day sleep. By this the equilibrium of dhatus and strength are maintained and the kapha nourishes the organs and ensures longevity. In summer season nights become shorter and vata gets aggravated in the body due to Adana kala. Therefore, during this season, day time sleep is prescribed for all.

CONTRA-INDICATIONS OF DAY SLEEP

Sleeping during the day time in the seasons other than summer is not advisable as it causes vitiation of kapha and pitta. Persons with excessive fat, those who are addicted to taking unctuous (flattering, oily, groveling, creepy) substance, those with slaismika constitution, those suffering from diseases due to the vitiation of kapha and those suffering from dusivisa (artificial poisoning) should never sleep during day time. If one violates the prescription regarding day sleep, he should subject himself to halimaka (serious type of jaundice), headache, timidity, heaviness of the body, malaise, loss of digestive power, hridayopalepa (a feeling as if phlegm adhered to the heart), oedema, anorexia, nausea, rhinitis, hemicrania, urticaria, eruption, abscess, pruritis, drowsiness, coughing, diseases of the throat, impairment of the memory and intelligence, obstruction of the circulating channels of the body, fever, weakness of sensory and motor organs and enhancement of the toxic effects of

artificial poisons. So, one should keep in view, merits and demerits of sleep-in various seasons and situations, in order that it may bring happiness to him.

Effect of night awakening

Vigil during night causes dryness in the body; sleep during day time causes unctuousness and dozing in sitting posture does neither cause dryness nor unctuousness. Vigil during night and day-sleep both are responsible for causing Kasa vyadhi.

SLEEP AND NUTRITION

Dietary and nutritional choices affect sleep duration and quality. Research is being conducted in an attempt to discover what kinds of nutritional choices result in better sleep quality. A study in the Western Journal of Nursing Research in 2011 compared how sleep quality was affected by four different diets: a high-protein diet, a high-fat diet, a high-carbohydrate diet, and a control diet. Results indicated that the diets high in protein resulted in fewer wakeful episodes during night-time sleep. The high carbohydrate diet was linked to much shorter periods of quiescent or restful sleep. These results suggest that ingested nutrients do play a role in determining sleep quality. Another investigation published in Nutrition Research in 2012 examined the effects of various combinations of dietary choices in regard to sleep. Although it is difficult to determine one perfect diet for sleep enhancement, this study indicated that a variety of micro and macro nutrients are needed to maintain levels of healthful and restful sleep. A varied diet containing fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat proteins, and whole grains can be the best nutritional option for individuals seeking to improve the quality of their sleep.

Impact on Overall Health

Chronic lack of sleep has been linked to

- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Weakened immune system
- Mental disorders such as depression and anxiety

Conversely, regular, high-quality sleep strengthens the immune system, supports a healthy metabolism, and helps prevent many lifestyle diseases.

CONCLUSION

Sleep is not merely a passive state, but an active, dynamic process that contributes immensely to our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. In a world where productivity is often prioritized over rest, understanding the value of sleep can lead to a more balanced, healthier, and fulfilling life. Protect your sleep—because better sleep means better health. Thus it is observed that the person has sufficient sleep according to the age, climatic, physical etc factor can attain positive energy and an enthusiasm to perform work. And ultimately lead to a better and healthy life. Sleep is a chief nourisher at life's feast. It occurs due to increased Tamoguna. During sleep anabolism is active and catabolism relatively passive thus prevents body organs from damaged and repairs damage at cellular level. Thus, sleep is essential for survival.

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